

CCA #40 Old Salinas River Estuary Critical Coastal Area

DESCRIPTION

The Old Salinas River Estuary is in Monterey County, south of the community of Moss Landing. This Critical Coastal Area (CCA) watershed has numerous agricultural uses, as well as urban development and the Moss Landing Harbor.

The Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) allows landowners along 93 miles of the Salinas River to push the sand bars and vegetation to the riverbanks with bulldozers. In 2001, approximately 15,000 cubic yards of material was dredged from the Old Salinas River channel, and material removed from the channel was deposited back onto the adjacent farmland. The MCWRA also dredges several creeks and lakes (some farmed) to remove the build-up of sediment, much of which has eroded from adjacent farmlands. Organic pesticides have been found in fish, shellfish, and sediment.



Old Salinas River Estuary
(Photo courtesy Ross Clark).

For more photos, see the [California Coastal Records Project](#).

Waterbodies in this CCA that are listed as impaired on the current (2016) Clean Water Act 303(d) list are **Old Salinas River Estuary** (impaired by nutrients and pesticides); **Old Salinas River** (impaired by pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrate, chlorophyll-a, E. coli bacteria, fecal coliform bacteria, turbidity, toxicity, and the pesticides diazinon and chlorpyrifos); **Tembladero Slough** (impaired by pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrate, chlorophyll-a, E. coli bacteria, fecal coliform bacteria, total coliform bacteria, Enterococcus bacteria, turbidity, toxicity, nickel, and the pesticides diazinon, chlorpyrifos, and malathion); and **Moss Landing Harbor** (impaired by toxicity, sedimentation/siltation, indicator bacteria, dissolved oxygen, pH, nickel, arsenic, PCBs, and the pesticides diazinon, chlorpyrifos, dieldrin, and DDT).

Potential sources of these pollutants, organized by **Source Categories**, are listed as **Agriculture** (agriculture); **Urban Runoff** (urban runoff/storm sewers); **Miscellaneous** (domestic animals/livestock, and domestic pet waste); **Unpermitted Discharges** (illegal dumping); **Natural Sources**; and **Source Unknown**.

CRITERIA FOR CCA IDENTIFICATION

The Old Salinas River Estuary [Critical Coastal Area](#) (CCA) was identified in 2002 based on the criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2002 Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list (Old Salinas River Estuary) flows into a federal Marine Managed Area (Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary).

This CCA also met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 303(d) list (Old Salinas River Estuary) flows into a state-identified Principal Bay or Estuary (Monterey Bay). See California Department of Fish and Wildlife's "[California's Living Marine Resources: A Status Report](#)" (2001) and associated [map of the Principal Bays and Estuaries of California](#).

In addition, this CCA met the 2014 CCA identification criterion of a coastal watershed where an impaired waterbody on the 2010 Clean Water Act 303(d) list (Moro Cojo Slough, and Moss Landing Harbor) is adjacent to a [California Marine Protected Area](#) (Moro Cojo Slough State Marine Reserve).

ADDRESSING POLLUTANTS

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to make a [list of impaired waters](#) that are not attaining water quality standards, and to develop a [Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\)](#) or similar approach to account for all sources of the pollutants that caused the water to be listed as impaired. TMDLs include allocations to both point and nonpoint sources (NPS) of the listed pollutants. The current (2016) 303(d) list of impaired waterbodies includes pollutants, potential pollutant sources, and year a TMDL was approved or is expected.

To address NPS pollutants, see [California's Nonpoint Source Management Measures](#) for guidance on selecting appropriate Management Measures, which consist of a suite of plans, practices, technologies, operating methods, or other measures that may be used to control NPS pollution.

Information for this factsheet was originally compiled by members of California's Critical Coastal Areas Statewide Committee in 2006. The factsheet was revised and updated in 2019 by the California Coastal Commission's Water Quality Program staff.

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